Idolatry
1

1.

One interesting place I am starting to remember is the left front corner of my childhood home, by the garage. I grew up in a town nicknamed “Horsetown USA” because apparently there are more horses there than people. A blip in the Inland Empire, a small town relative to the rest of Southern California with a mix of horse trails, cul-de-sacs and dairy farms.

It always smelled like horse and cow shit. It’s something you just got used to over time. The water in Norco is consistently ranked some of the worst in the country, partly due to the cow shit and partly forever chemicals and uranium.

One time I was playing catch with a neighbor and the baseball rolled under my dads 2001 Honda Civic. I was the smallest so naturally I was the one to crawl under the car and grab the ball. I remember being so pleased with myself, that I could creep under the car and drag myself across the gravel. I think Lost or Survivor was playing on the family TV the night before so endurance and survival was on my mind.

I screamed so loud when I finally came out with the ball because I was so proud. I started to feel a burning sensation on my legs. I looked down and my whole body was covered in red ants.

It was hard to please everyone. I really really wanted to though. God was on my mind constantly, I was terrified of going to hell so I thought the best way to do that was to be good and do what people tell me to do.

For as long as I could remember, death always felt around the corner. I would watch the news and see commercials to help kids with terminal cancer, hear the church talk about the car accident that killed one of the members 16-year old daughter, an elementary school classmate's sister who died after getting bucked off a horse. I thought my fate was sealed so I had to make sure I was right with everyone. My mom loved to leave little brochures around the house to remind us, “Heaven or Hell? You Decide.”

I had a hard time reading the Bible and didn’t really understand it, deep down it didn’t make any sense to me. But the devil works in mysterious ways so I tried to keep good thoughts and good actions. I was so embarrassed having friends over. My parents only played christian radio and we had to pray over dinner. The shame made me feel evil. Being Christian is something I should have been

proud of, afterall. One day my dad was sitting alone in the living room, praying. He asked me, “Can you feel him in this room?” And I couldn’t.

2.

Albert is loved by many. He lives on the second floor in his small apartment and it is filled with trinkets. He has a flame thrower, throwing stars, random 3D-printed objects he makes when he’s high. He has 2 cats that don’t seem to mind the chaos he lives in. He likes to hit his DMT pen and take a rohypnol when he’s bored. Everyone wonders how he has such a crazy selection of benzodiazepines. They thank him for it. Sometimes he even has mushrooms and opiates. His eyebrow piercing is infected but he doesn’t seem to mind and he pulls it off still somehow.

When the sun sets, he goes out on his bike and blasts music on his JBL speaker and does his deliveries. He is seen as a good guy that cares about others. He’s been to jail a few times but he stays optimistic. He doesn’t take life too seriously. Sometimes he disappears for months and people start to panic.

His ex-girlfriend used to drop acid into her eyeballs. She also used to beat him, and people hate her for it. People tend to ignore the fact that he beat her as well, because he said it was self-defense. They see Albert as the only Victim because, from his account, her BPD forced him to be violent in order to defend himself. One of Albert's friends that visits his apartment also dated her. They

always talk about her together. They do lines of coke and tell each other how much they miss her. She doesn’t live in the city anymore, nobody knows where she is. They miss her and want her to be okay. Whenever each one of them starts to see someone new, she is often the first point of conversation. They want others to know how much she hurt them, and to warn them about how that hurt has manifested in avoidant attachment. One girl ends up in the psych ward for a week after dating Albert’s friend.

3.

There is nothing more cringe than when you try to convince yourself you are into some kinky shit when actually you don’t really like it.

Like the time you went up the stairs being dragged naked with a leash and collar and thought that it was fun but really you were embarrassed and just wanted to have sex and the role play wasn’t doing anything. But you could tell how much it meant to the other person and how much they enjoyed it so you pretended to be a bad dog. And you stuck a finger up his ass just for him even though it felt so weird.

You can remember the smell of the mildew of that apartment and sleeping on the floor and listening to throbbing gristle and ignoring your parents calls. You remember the yellow tint of the sun coming through a stained white sheet he used as a curtain and the smell of palo santo mixed with ylang-ylang.

You remember how you knew his parents were well-off and loved him very much and he just wanted to live a lifestyle that was different from the safety and security he grew up with. It wasn’t unusual for people in LA to live in squalor or sleep on their friends' couches despite having a well-off family. He just wanted to be cool and admired by the LA rave scene.

You are happy for him now, he’s married and he and his wife have a small-batch kombucha brand. You wonder if he still wears that dog mask.

4.

Oscar loves to say “Forgive Everyone” on his instagram. I saw that he posted a photo with the same caption, but he was standing next to Eli. Him and Eli are childhood friends, both from the higher echelons of Orange County.

I do not think Eli is not good, not in any way shape or form. When I first met him, he was cheating on his girlfriend in Japan with a former friend of mine. She ended up telling his girlfriend about it, but he ended up convincing his girlfriend that she was crazy and lying because she was jealous.

I didn’t think much of him afterwards after I left Los Angeles until I learned he had started an online cult in which he convinced young women, often girls under 18, to starve themselves and idolize self-harm and suicidal behavior. It was an accelerationist Kali Yuga cult that worshipped a woman named Ava who declared herself a “CYBER ANGEL BABY”.

Multiple people alleged that Ava pressured them into attempting suicide. Ava, of course, being Eli. Some beliefs circulated by Ava included that homosexuality is a disease, certain races of people should be banned from voting, killing Jews can save a nation, and men should “tame” women the same way a father would his child.

After the cult was arguably dismantled Eli continued to post long, corny esoteric ramblings on the cult's website such as "Ava died so she can crack the egregorial glass ceiling upon her ascension, raining down *redacted* redpills on us all. She sacrificed herself so the last phase of Yuga could be brought to existence. Ava has become one, Ava has become all. I am now Ava: You are now Ava."

Despite the truth coming out about the cult being a neo-nazi, extremist suicide group, Eli moved on and found new successes. He worked at some point for Palintir, and shortly after created a new NFT-cult and changed his name from Ava to Lillith. It was so successful that even Elon Musk had posted a meme with one of Lillith's NFT's on twitter.

Eventually, it came to light that Lillith was in fact the same person as Ava. Grimes no longer wanted to associate with the people who run the NFT collective. There was backlash but Eli apologized on Lillith's twitter account. After the drama had cooled down his NFT's got a beautiful 5 million dollar investment. Eli hosts parties around the world with well-known underground artists. Eli will continue to be successful until he dies. He says it is all just performance art.

One of his old coworkers at Palintir describes him as a kind-hearted person and very intelligent, just unstable and volatile.

I have a very hard time forgiving him. I have a hard time forgiving Oscar for forgiving him.

5.

I was whipped in the ass with a belt until I was a junior in High School. I thought this was normal until I moved to Sweden. My nurse started bringing up words like abuse and I couldn't wrap my head around how it could be abuse because I thought the majority of children had to deal with that. Corporal punishment has been around for so long, across so many cultures, surely this is just something people grow up with? What made me special enough for that to be considered abuse?

One time I left the battery on the car so the air conditioning was running but the engine wasn't. I didn't realize that this kills the battery pretty quickly but my mom let me know when she was done grocery shopping. I was told to expect an ass beating when I got home. I apologized over and over but she didn't want to hear it. I gulped and my heart started beating like crazy. There was nothing worse.

We drove home in silence, my mom turned on some christian radio and I zoned out. I helped her take the groceries into the apartment and we started to cook dinner. My fear dropped a bit and thought that maybe she had forgiven me. We started to joke around and she laughed a bit while we ate. She told me to go do my homework and I sighed with relief. Before I went to bed

she grabbed me by the ears and took me into the bathroom and hit me so hard I couldn't sit the next day.

I still consider it mild. When I think of violence in the family, in the home, I don’t really consider my situation that bad. Deserving? Absolutely not. Unnecessary? Absolutely.

I learned the best way to avoid that whole situation was to lie about everything. I had started smoking pot with my friend Laura on the few weeknights I was allowed out. We smoked from a strawberry shaped pipe my brother bought. We would go to the TJ Maxx parking lot and listen to dubstep and sometimes Laura would give me one of her adderall and we would go window shopping. Maybe we would buy a Cinnabon or a Jamba Juice. In those moments everything felt wonderful and possible.

Me and Laura would wait for the high to wear off before we drove towards home and we would share an orange because it got rid of the smell on our fingers and in our mouth. Laura would drive me back to my apartment, we would take a walk around the block and laugh and then hug before we both went home to our equally strict moms.

My mom absolutely adores Laura. Laura’s mom told her once that I looked like I had cancer because I shaved my head. Laura is still my best friend.

6.

I’m at the point in sobriety where I think drinking and drugs are really stupid. But I have no right to judge because I thought drinking was the smartest thing in the world. I loved to talk to people and tell them all about my life and secrets I should have kept to myself.

I’m very grateful I was never approached on the street by a 20-something year old with an iPhone recording me and asking me to tell his followers a dark secret of mine. I’m still afraid of that happening to me.

“What is something you haven’t told your parents?” he may ask. I wouldn’t even know where to start.

Maybe about the time I overdosed on GHB at a rave and woke up to my friends at the time walking me into the hospital and my phone was at 1%. I decided I was fine but I wasn’t allowed to go back to the rave so I had to take the metro from Union Station to Santa Monica. I passed out so long that I went back and forth the whole route twice.

I would have to explain to the 20-something that I just made that up and to please not post it anywhere but it would be too late.

7.

I spend the majority of my time world building. I'm begging you to give me a prompt! I will come up with something. Just a word. Please no easy words though like love and heartbreak.

I'm sitting on the train on the way home from the woods and the people next to me are so fashionable. They look like they would be fun to talk to or maybe they would think I am insane. If only they knew the awesome music I'm listening to in my headphones…

Sometimes I look at those cool people and I wonder what their lives have been like. In Sweden it is so hard to tell. We're going through a rural era so maybe they live out in the woods with working class parents and are taking the train to the city and they have found their own style and people that love and accept them for who they are.

I don't consider myself to be working class, because I do not work. I am considered to be what many Facebook commenters call the "Parasite Class". Sometimes I feel like a parasite, but I don't think I will be a parasite forever. I'm waiting for my turn to get properly diagnosed and then the state employment agency can help me find a suitable career. I will then make enough to pay taxes and my monthly bills. I am loved regardless.

8.

Gracey likes to take her boat out at sunset and paddle next to the dolphins. She gets to touch them and feel their beautiful skin. She takes her nightly swim in the warm Florida water and holds starfish in her hands and gets inspired by their texture. She runs out of the ocean and her beautiful long brown hair quickly starts to curl into beachy waves. She spends a lot of time in the ocean, but mostly at night.

She loves orchids, all kinds of them. She has a greenhouse with rare orchids that she has lovingly grown and taken care of. The orchids look so happy, so alive, like nothing you could ever imagine. They are in their habitat and so is she.

She blows stunning glass coasters in vibrant colors that can remind you of the orchids she cares for. She cooks beautiful, complex vegan dishes, with plating she obviously has honed to perfection from her experience working as a chef for several years.

Everything her hands touch turns into something amazing. She laughs hard and loves animals and deserves the world. She wasn’t always next to the ocean. You know the

pain she has experienced. She is happy now, and that’s all you’ve ever wanted for her.

9.

Max and his friends started shooting firecrackers at each other when they were 7 years old. Every Saturday they would put their allowance money together and go to one of the stores that sold Bang Snaps and then they would stand in a circle and throw them as hard as they could at each other's feet. Life in Alamogordo was boring to them. Even though White Sands National Park was nearby, they just saw it as a field of dust and didn't get why so many tourists drove to see it.

Around the time Max and his friends started to hit puberty, they weren't satisfied with the small bang snaps anymore. They convinced Max's older brother to drive outside of town and buy M-80's, which they would dare each other to stand next to. The closest one to the M-80 when it detonated was rewarded with cheers and their name written in the sand with a crown above it. They all lit up sparklers afterward and ran around and screamed as loud as they could. Max loved the explosions, he loved the thud in his chest, he loved the chaos when everyone started to run away from the sparks and laugh.

This continued well into High School and at the same time new traditions started to be added. Thanks to Max's older brother being 25 now, a pack of Camel Crush and a handle of Fireball was brought to each outing to share.

Max had his driver's license now and would pack everyone into the trunk of his Land Cruiser and drive to the outskirts of White Sands where the ritual would begin. They would sit around and look at the missile range and wonder how many tons of explosives have been detonated there. It felt like a given to continue to explode things there.

One Saturday, one of Max's friends drank half of the fireball before they could even start lighting up the M-80's. It was hot, the middle of the summer and they didn't think to bring any water. Adrian could not stop puking and everyone started to panic because if any of their parents finds out about the Fireball they are all screwed.

Adrian continued to vomit and begged to go home, the sun was starting to set but it felt so wrong because they had done this every Saturday for over 8 years now. It wouldn't be the same if something were to happen to Adrian though, Max thought. He started to imagine the worst situations possible. He screamed at everyone to get in the car and they drove back into town, ran into Walmart and bought Adrian a water bottle and some pringles.

Adrian puked in the back of the truck twice. Everyone had some puke on them and lowkey was pissed at him for it. But he is their brother so it's ok. Adrian shakingly sipped on the water. He teared up and apologized to everyone,

embarrassed that he couldn't hold his liquor. "At least you didn't shit your pants!" said Max. Everyone laughed and Adrian was relieved. They sat in the parking lot for another hour and decided it was best to try again next Saturday.

Adrian's parents were not happy. They smelled the alcohol in his breath and saw the vomit all over his clothing. His parents called Max's parents and Max lost his privileges to the Land Cruiser until school started again.

The tradition died out quickly after, and it made Max incredibly depressed. He loved the explosions and chaos and the brotherhood. He was now a senior, and he still talked to all of his friends at school. It seemed like Max was the only one who wanted to keep blowing shit up.

Max eventually graduated and moved to Albuquerque, where he got a job as a Warehouse Associate. He liked his coworkers enough, but he thought that they thought he was weird. He found comfort in the online Pyrotechnics community. He would often go sit in the work toilet and watch Instagram Reels of his fellow pyro friends until someone knocked and told him how long he had been on the toilet.

Evil_Pyro is his favorite account. Max loves the intensity of his fireworks, how they sound like death screaming from the ground on the way up, how they flicker in the sky

before it explodes into a giant ball and all of the car alarms on the street go off.

On his days off, Max goes live on TikTok and shoots fireworks. He gets about 10 viewers and a few comments per stream, many are his friends within the Pyro community.

“Good shit bro” “Nice one” “Keep going man..I love your account”.

Max reads the comments over and over again.

10.

Sometimes I go on such long walks in the woods and I stare at the ground for so long that when I stop and look up it appears as if the trees are shrinking away from me. I try not to bring it up to people I'm not close with because I am afraid they will think I am crazy. This also happens when I am out at the beach for too long. I start to see a shrinking halo in the sky.

My ex boyfriend told me it was normal and it happens to everyone. I was happy when he told me that because maybe then I'm not hallucinating and it's just a regular optical illusion.

A long time ago a different ex boyfriend left some altoids on my nightstand accidentally and I ate the last two and I didn't know they were laced with acid. I had no clue why I was hallucinating for over 8 hours straight. I stayed inside for a week praying that I hadn't lost my mind and when my boyfriend returned he asked me where his mints were. I told him I ate them and he got super mad at me and explained what they were. Meanwhile I was beaming with happiness because I realized what happened and that I was not, in fact, losing my mind. But things like the tree illusion usually scare me enough to try to find comfort on the internet.

Trying to find an answer on google doesn’t help, mainly because whatever I search usually doesn’t make any sense. “Trees start shrinking when I walk” “Standing still shrinking trees in front of me”... Google simply does not understand what I'm getting at and I totally get why it wouldn’t.

Sometimes, if I’m in the mood to freak myself out, I’ll just stand and watch it happen for as long as it goes. It feels like the outside world is shrinking and I am going to shrink with it.

It’s kind of similar to how it felt when you were a kid and you twisted the swing set and then you would spin around so quickly that the world continued to spin around you when you stood still. But freakier

11.

I can’t sleep so I watch a video on YouTube about the wife of the guy that got shot in the neck. The video suggests that she is a foreign asset. The narrator talks about her parents and how they were involved in several government agencies. I think about how maybe the American public hasn’t seen an assassination like this since JFK. I still can’t sleep. I start to watch another youtube video about a mac and cheese recipe from 1845. I quickly fall asleep.

I know someone who was a professional at Lucid Dreaming. She told me she could astral project and that the second she closed her eyes to sleep she could leave her body and go wherever she wanted to.

12.

I’m going to miss myself so much when i die.

13.

My sister used to piss everywhere like a dog and when she would pick me up from school she was always late. She has a tramp stamp of a William Blake poem.

This is the first year since she was 14 that she isn't going to Electric Daisy Carnival because she's pregnant with her first child.

I'm still mad at her but I can't help but tear up thinking about how she is happy and how in love she is. She's ready to bring life into this world too!

14.

As a teenager I spent a lot of time harming myself through various conspiracy theories. For about a week I believed that I could get all the nutrients I needed if I just stared directly at the sun right before it set.

My vision is bad but I haven’t been able to motivate myself to get a new prescription or to fix my glasses.

My boyfriend thinks its so cute when I squint my eyes to watch the TV and I love seeing him smile

15.

One thing that haunts me is when I accidentally shoplifted from a small business and the alarm went off and I got banned from the store.

I wanted to shop there so much

It’s hard to convince someone that you’re just forgetful and when there wasn't a cart to put anything in that you just put it in your bag instead.

I drove away from the store in my ex-girlfriend's white VW bug that we spray painted hearts on and went to some guy's house to peg him for money. It amazed me that he snorted xanax because I thought it was such a waste.

He asked me if I could pretend to be his girlfriend for his kid’s birthday party. I said yeah then I left and blocked him.